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World Notes

POLAND

A Game of Musical Chairs

For months there had been rumors of an impending leadership shuffle in Warsaw. But after the shake-up was announced last week, power remained exactly where it had begun: in the grip of General Wojciech Jaruzelski. The Polish leader stepped down as Premier and then went before parliament to name as his successor Deputy Prime Minister Zbigniew Messner. Earlier, Jaruzelski had himself elected head of the Council of State, Poland's collective presidency. He will continue in his all-powerful role as Communist Party chief.

Jaruzelski's resignation was an attempt to signal that Poland's political crisis, which began more than a year before he declared martial law in December 1981, is ending. He can now devote himself to repairing the damage done by the defection of an estimated 1 million Poles from party rolls in the past five years. By promoting Messner, 56, an economist, to succeed him as Premier, he also underscored his intention to rebuild Poland's shattered economy while distancing himself from difficulties ahead. Noted one Western diplomat based in Poland: "He can now blame someone else when things get worse."



Jaruzelski and Messner

NICARAGUA

Friends in Need, Friends Indeed



The SR-71 Blackbird

while they will be talking to us, they will not drop their friends."

U.S. officials were alerted to the shipments last month when routine satellite surveillance spotted five Soviet ships loaded with crates docked at a Nicaraguan port near Bluefields. On Oct. 31, their suspicions were raised further when an SR-71 Blackbird reconnaissance plane photographed military equipment that is commonly used by the Nicaraguans being unloaded from other Soviet ships in the Cuban port of Mariel. The intelligence analysts say the deliveries included at least two batteries of SA-2 or SA-3 surface-to-air missiles, which reportedly will be installed at the Punta Huete air base near Managua. The Soviets also sent an unspecified number of Mi-8 troop transport and six Mi-24D attack helicopters.

LEBANON

"There Is No Alternative"

The disturbing series of events began last week when an anonymous telephone caller claimed that Americans held hostage by the extremist Islamic Jihad in Lebanon would be executed. The next day a bundle of letters was delivered to the Associated Press office in Beirut. One was addressed to President Reagan and signed by four of the six missing Americans. That seemed to confirm that the

four—A.P. Correspondent Terry Anderson; the Rev. Lawrence Jenco, a Catholic priest; Agriculturist Thomas Sutherland; and David Jacobsen, director of the American University hospital in Beirut—were still alive. Two others, Diplomat William Buckley and Librarian Peter Kilburn, are not accounted for and feared dead.

The hostages' message urged the President to work for their release by abandoning his policy against negotiating with terrorists. "You negotiated over the hostages from the TWA plane," the letter read. "We are asking for the same consideration. There is no alternative." The letters complained that the hostages were being held without "proper exercise, sanitation, fresh air or balanced diet." The White House reaffirmed its longstanding policy against negotiating with terrorists, but Administration Spokesman Edward Djerjajian nonetheless declared that the U.S. was prepared to "talk with the abductors themselves to obtain the release of the hostages."

CHINA

Stop-and-Go Reforms

As they chart a course that blends communism and capitalism, China's policymakers send off a mix of policy signals: some tightening, some loosening. Last week the government announced a two-year ban on automobile imports. But authorities also moved closer to institutionalizing stock trading, a practice that has been illegal since Mao's revolution. A branch of Shanghai Investment and Trust has been authorized to oversee the buying and selling of stocks and distribution of dividends.

The auto ban aims to curb a Chinese importing spree. Between September 1984 and March 1985, the country's foreign-exchange reserves declined from nearly \$17 billion to about \$11 billion. The government also hopes to encourage domestic car production.

The decision to allow stock trading is part of a plan to reduce the strain on the government's financial resources by raising private capital. But city officials remain cautious. Says Shanghai Spokesman Wang Mingyang: "We will not allow the unproductive speculation and profit making you find in Western stock markets."

JAPAN

Dangerously Off Course

Japanese officials will never know just how close Japan Air Lines Flight 441 came to disaster on Oct. 31, when Soviet fighters scrambled as it strayed near restricted airspace over Sakhalin Island. Last week airline officials revealed that the JAL 747, carrying 132 people, took off at 12:14 p.m. from Narita Airport outside Tokyo and headed for Paris by way of Moscow. Shortly before 1 p.m., Captain Morihiro Nishioka, 39, spotted dense clouds ahead. Anticipating turbulence, he switched off the automatic inertial navigational system to guide the jet manually around the mass. Nishioka claims that he then forgot to return to the INS controls.

For the next 55 minutes, the plane was pushed 69 miles off course by 200-knot winds and dangerously close to the Soviet defense zone at Sakhalin. When crew members realized the error, they radioed Soviet controllers, who granted permission for the plane to change course. Only later did Nishioka learn that Soviet jets had been put on airborne alert and had trailed his craft. While the incident ended happily enough, it was a chilling reminder of Korean Air Lines Flight 007, which in September 1983 also strayed near Sakhalin. The Soviets fired on the jet, killing all 269 people on board.



JAL's Nishioka